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Here and There

THEN AND NOW PERSIA



1870 Then and Now—Persia 1920

BY MRS. SAMUEL G. WILSON.

IN 1870 there was but one mission in Persia, that at Urumia. This mission, begun by Dr. Justin Perkins in 1834 under the American Board as the "Mission to the Nestorians," was transferred in 1870 to the Presbyterian Board and called the "Mission to Persia." Dr. Perkins, the patriarch of the mission, had closed his 35 years of service in 1869.

When the mission began, but one woman of the Nestorians could read, and only a few men. The school for boys, started with seven boys in a cellar in the little village of Seir, has developed into a theological school sending out preachers. The girls' school, begun by Miss Fidelia Fiske with two pupils, has educated hundreds of women.

The Press, established by Mr. Breath in 1839, had in 1873 printed 110,000 volumes and published the first newspaper in Persia—the *Rays of Light*. Village churches dotted the plain of Urumia and every winter wonderful revivals showed the deeply religious feeling of the people.

The high-water mark of this mission was reached when, in 1884-85, it celebrated its Jubilee, a "feast of tabernacles," when 1500 gathered in a large tent on the college grounds. The presence of 800 Nestorian women was the most impressive feature of the occasion. The Syrian Evangelical Church then numbered 73 congregations with 6000 adherents.

In 1879 the college was begun by Dr. John H. Shedd in a large garden two miles from the city. Here also was built Westminster Hospital, where

for 27 years Dr. Cochran performed his miracles of healing. The girls' school, greatly enlarged, was named Fiske Seminary. Besides the two higher institutions there were 100 village schools and four high schools. In the plain of Urumia, the Nestorian people and the whole environment had been changed into an intelligent, Christian community, and work had been maintained among the wild mountain villages. The first attempt to reach the Kurds is shown by a small grammar of their written language compiled by Rev. S. A. Rhea.

The English Church Missionary Society began work at Ispahan in 1869, dividing the North and South of Persia with the Presbyterians. The Russian Orthodox Mission in 1899 drew many adherents from the Nestorians by hopes of political protection.

NOW

The Mission to Persia in fifty years has grown from one station, established for one nationality, to two Missions—the East and West, with eight stations, working among all nationalities, but placing an ever increasing emphasis on Moslem work, as the Moslems include about nine-tenths of the population.

The WEST PERSIA MISSION has two stations, Urumia and Tabriz.

URUMIA has suffered more from the ravages of war than any mission station in the world outside of Turkey. At the first invasion of Turks and Kurds thousands of Christians fled to Russia, while 15,000 found refuge in the mission premises for five months. When the Russian army returned, "the missionaries were nearly all convalescing from typhoid or typhus, the hospital submerged with sick, villages in ruins, the country in anarchy." The work was resumed in all departments and the relief work continued.

In July, 1918, the second invasion of Turks occurred. Seventy thousand Syrians fled to British protection, and Dr. Shedd, who accompanied them, fell a victim to cholera. The remnant who reached Bakuba (near Bagdad) are now receiving help from the Relief Commission, and await repatriation with protection by the Christian powers. The missionaries were deported to Tabriz and the mission buildings looted and destroyed.

Thus the work of eighty-five years seems wiped out, yet it has seen its glorious fruition in the martyrs who have laid down their lives for the faith, and in the remnant who have suffered the loss of all things in a like loyalty. Of this station, four missionaries have died, truly victims of the war, and many have lost all that their homes contained. Those deported to Tabriz are not yet able to return to Urumia, and the Kurds have a "hold up" on the country.

TABRIZ, 1873. The work in Tabriz begun forty-seven years ago, has a good equipment. The new hospital where 12,000 patients are treated in a year, was built five years ago. The Memorial School for boys, established in new quarters thirty years ago by the generosity of Mrs. Thaw, and the Girls' School, lately much enlarged, report 465 pupils. In the last year the church received more members than in any of the past ten years, mostly from the schools. One member was a convert from Islam, a doctor with a large practice. These figures are from the latest report available, which also mentions meetings every evening for several months kept up by Miss Holliday for the Armenians, who seemed more touched than ever before. Much evangelistic work has been done by touring in past years, when travel was feasible, and always in connection with the city dispensaries.

In Tabriz is the grave of Mirza Ibrahim, the first convert from Islam to die for Christ. He was strangled in prison in 1803. During the war the city was twice occupied by Turks. At the second invasion in 1918, the American Consul ordered all the missionaries to the South and went with them. Dr. Vanneman and Mr. Jessup remained and were held as prisoners by the Turks 44 days. The hospital was looted and other mission buildings were much injured by being occupied as barracks. The missionaries have now returned. Relief work demands much time and strength. In the general distress, weekly distribution is made to 38,000 Moslems, and industrial work has been organized for cleaning streets, building roads and a dam. Great loss has come to the out-stations. The leading Christian men have been tortured and killed, and their wives and daughters taken captive. Dr. S. G. Wilson* laid down his life in the relief work in 1916.

The EAST PERSIA MISSION has five stations—Teheran, Hamadan, Kasvin, Resht and Meshed.

TEHERAN, 1872. This station, with Hamadan, was separated from Urumia and Tabriz in 1883 as the East Persia Mission, because the long journey of three or four weeks made annual meetings difficult. The school for boys has now a large new plant and Dr. Jordan's plan is to make it a college with adequate endowment. The first class to be graduated in the twelve years' course included eight Persians, three Jews and two Armenians, and there were 520 enrolled from these three nationalities.

The girls' school, Irau Bethel, numbers about 300,

*Rev. Samuel G. Wilson, D. D., Teacher, Minister, Author, Administrator, Humanitarian, died in Tabriz, July, 1916, of typhoid fever, contracted while supervising Armenian relief in the Caucasus.—EDITOR.

and its alumnae association of 70 has a wide influence.

The Hospital is now in the hands of a missionary's son, who married a missionary's daughter; the trained nurse is also a missionary's daughter, so the succession, most noticeable in Urumia, is keeping up. A nurses' class has been started here. The record of patients in one year at the dispensaries is 18,728, and 333 in-patients. Relief work has also been a prominent feature here, and Rev. C. A. Douglass is another whose life was sacrificed in this service. Teheran had a Persian scholar in Dr. Potter, who did much in providing Christian literature.

KAZVIN, 1906. This station is a sub-station of Teheran, and has the distinction of being held by one couple, Dr. and Mrs. Lawrence. Both are doctors, and Dr. Lawrence is a minister as well. In one year he preached 200 times and followed each service with a medical clinic, filling 3,500 prescriptions. Mrs. Lawrence adds to her medical work a school and meetings for women and boys.

A new kind of service the past year has been the "hostess house," which Miss Holliday opened during her stay, while exiled from Tabriz. Afternoon tea and gingerbread, Sunday services and a motherly woman's kind sympathy, were much appreciated by the British soldiers.

RESHT, 1906. This station was also started as a sub-station of Teheran by one couple, Mr. and Mrs. Schuler, and for some years had only school work and evangelistic services. The medical work is now a great power, as is shown, for example, by Dr. Frame's report of 5,000 vaccinations in one year for the government, and the item of \$1,000 increase in receipts. The tide of war has brought a rush of refugees at different times, so that relief work was necessary here, too.

HAMADAN, 1880. Miss Montgomery, "the great lady," as she was called in Persian, was an outstanding figure in this station for thirty-five years as Principal of Faith Hubbard School for Girls. This station has been in the war-zone and occupied by Russian or Turkish armies. Though it was twice evacuated and twice reoccupied in one year, the boys' school was not closed a single day. Its usual enrollment is 146. Jewish work is one of the departments in this city of Esther and Mordecai.

Two memorial hospitals are the equipment of the splendid medical work, and in these last years have been used for soldiers. The Armenians had to flee before the Turkish invasion, but have returned. The British soldiers were served by a canteen.

Touring has been impossible under war conditions, but in the past it has been of great interest. Hamadan has a Persian scholar in Dr. Hawkes, who is now working on a revision of the New Testament.

KERMANSHAH, 1910, was started by Mr. and Mrs. (Dr.) Stead, who have been noted for their fearless touring. But war has changed conditions, as this station has been the scene of battles, and soldiers—Turkish, German, Austrian, Russian, English, Australian—have come and gone. Dr. Stead gave her services in the Turkish surgical hospital. Meanwhile, the little school and the meetings went on, and "all patients have received the Gospel, several becoming candidates for baptism."

MESHED, 1911. This latest venture of the mission is of thrilling interest when we consider that Dr. Esselstyn, single-handed, entered this stronghold of Islam, 300 miles from any other mission station, and held it for four years alone. The medical work, begun in 1916, reports 13,733 out-patients, 608 in-patients of twelve nationalities—from Russia.

Turkey, Afghanistan, Turkestan, India, Persia and Arabia. 24,373 copies of Scriptures have been sold. A great loss has come to the station the last year in the death of Dr. Esselstyn from typhus.

War conditions have given larger opportunities to show the spirit of service which is recognized the world over by the Red Cross symbol, and which has always characterized missionary work. The flag, which in Urumia sheltered 15,000 refugees for five months, is now a precious relic of the war at the Board of Foreign Missions, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York City. In a remarkable way, the position and influence of the missionary has been shown, as when Mr. Zeeckler was asked to act as Governor in Doletabad, and Dr. Shedd held his court as a Judge in Urumia.

Many lives have gone into the building of God's temple in Persia, and some in the foundation are now unseen. Many kinds of workmen have labored. Scholarship, business ability, medical skill, social, musical and linguistic gifts, have been employed. The worth and enduring quality of this temple have been revealed in the fiery trial of these last years, and it has stood the test.

November, 1919.

Price, five cents.

LEAFLETS FOR REFERENCE

Historical Sketch.....	.10	War Journal of a Missionary in Persia.....	.05
Question Book05		
Faith in the Flag.....	.04	The Urumia Exodus...	.10
A Persian Pioneer.....	.03		

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